1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1957
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

natives. It is unlikely that many iron axes ever reached the interior peoples; and the proximity of stone and the native's tendency to lose his implements (which necessitates constant replacements) greatly contributed to the continuation of this stone-axe technique in the aboriginal culture.

The dugout canoe used by the natives possesses no outrigger; but it is a fairly well-shaped boat and is much superior to the indigenous bark canoe that the native had used as his chief means of water transport before the arrival of the Malay. The Malays who traded with the Australians used the double outrigger. Some of the present-day natives know how to make an outrigger, but this addition to the dugout was not appreciated by the more conservative aborigines, and never became part of their culture. It is likely that this was due to the influence of their own bark canoe. This latter boat lacked an outrigger, and it was easier and simpler to learn how to manage a dugout canoe without an outrigger than to learn how to operate one with it.

Judging from the direct evidence of the natives who were alive at the time when the Malays were still coming to North Australia, it is probable that the blacks did not manufacture their own dugouts until the white Australian government sent its gunboats up to the western entrance of the Arafura Sea and prevented Malay trade with the black natives. Several informants reported that when the last consignment of canoes was eventually broken up, all of the people went back to bark canoes, but that a few of the men from the English Company Islands had learned how to make the dugout, and the manufacture of this type of boat was learned from them. This story seems likely, for the termination of the Malay voyages occurred when several of the informants were old enough to observe and to remember the exact circumstances. Groote Eylandt and Caledon Bay were also concentration points of the Malays. Groote Eylandt particularly was a region where the native culture had more intensive contact with Malay traders. Possibly dugout manufacture was learned there and the English Company Island people relearned it from their southern neighbors.[10]

The conservatism of Australian material culture is more or less demonstrated by the persistence of the bark canoe. Even today men who know how to make a dugout with outrigger equipment paddle their bark canoes across the open sea from island to island and from the various points of land. The fashioning of a dugout canoe takes much longer and requires more skill than any other article in the North Australian technology; further, after it has been made, it becomes a more or less permanent part of a man's equipment. The bark canoe is easily constructed; it can be made for immediate use with very little labor, and the material for its construction is always at hand. Its value in labor is consequently little, and it can be discarded with no feeling of loss. A bark canoe is seldom used after

[10] Tindale, *op. cit.*

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

177 501 one voyage, for it quickly becomes unfit for use, because of the cracking and warping of the bark. Since it does not become a permanent part of a man's possessions it is not an added responsibility and care, as is the case with the dugout canoe. The material for the dugout canoe is difficult to get, the trees used are frequently a considerable distance from the inland rivers or the sea, and it involves the labor of a number of men to transport the canoe from its place of manufacture to the water. The rarity of the material adds to the value of the canoe. The labor involved and the organization of the labor contribute their share to increasing the canoe's value to the native owner; consequently an aborigine who possesses a dugout canoe feels a considerable responsibility for its safety and upkeep, and the canoe gives him a relationship with his immediate environment which is permanent and will not allow him to make his decisions with the ease that he would if he did not feel the necessity of taking care of his property.

177 501 439 To sum up, the bark canoe fits into the general pattern of Murngin behavior. The Murngin is not particularly interested in his material culture and would rather not be disturbed by its burdens and responsibilities. The manufacture and possession of a dugout canoe obviously do not fit into the general scheme of things as does the bark canoe. It is highly probable that the tardy and partial acceptance of the dugout in Murngin culture is due to the above set of causes. When the Malays supplied the canoes ready-made and they could be acquired each season for turtle shell that was saved during the dry season, or for pearls that the native found while eating his oysters, the burden of making the canoe and the great responsibility of ownership were not felt. The turtle shell and pearls were worthless to the native, so that if a man lost his canoe he could replace it without any effort and without loss of any property that he valued. As a result, while the Malays supplied them ready-made the natives used them, but when the Malay supply was gone the bark canoe once more returned to partial use.

177 501 The dugout finally became a trait in Murngin material culture because a man has a better chance of harpooning a turtle, dugong, or shark in the comparatively firm footing supplied by a dugout than he has from the unsubstantial bark canoe. Several informants who were excellent sea hunters declared that this was the reason they used the dugout instead of the older bark canoe.

The canoe mast and the pandanus sail are but two parts of one general invention, since the former is a mechanical device used to articulate the latter to a dugout canoe. The technical equipment to make a mast was already in the hands of the native, since he is an expert carver. The ability he shows in the manufacture of his carved totemic emblems demonstrates this fact. The mast is a very simple object to make; what is more important, it takes but a few minutes and can be discarded when it has

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

been used only once, with no sense of real loss to the owner. It does not burden the native with "excess baggage." It is easier to make a new one than to keep an old one.

The use of the pandanus sail has become general in the north. It is easily constructed and only a few hours are needed for its manufacture. It is a labor-saving device, and any such invention is deeply appreciated by the leisure-loving blacks. It, too, fits into the general scheme; no new technique was needed for its manufacture. The simple twining method used in the construction of the native basket or mat, with only slight modification, made an excellent pandanus leaf sail, the only difference being in the size of the strands used.

The most difficult element in the learning process that would enable a man to sail a boat rather than paddle it was the actual sailing itself. As has been said, the manufacture of a mast and sail is simple; but to learn to sail a canoe with a large pandanus sail, to adjust it to the vagaries of winds and tides, and, in all, to learn the job of a sailor man, undoubtedly took a long time. From what the writer has seen of the native's lack of interest in any activity that was not pleasurable, it seems obvious to him that if the native had not had a keen interest in the sea and a strong wanderlust, both of which the dugout canoe and its mast and sail definitely satisfied, Murngin civilization would never have adopted this whole complex.

The Malay pipe is a small, straight stick with its center bored out; at about four inches from the distal end a hole is made in the side of the pipe which connects with the central chamber; this latter hole is lined with a small piece of tin and forms the bowl of the pipe. Bamboo or cane is generally used, or a small tree whose central core has been eaten out by termites. The Malays introduced both the use and the manufacture of the tobacco pipe during the period in which they traded with the aborigines. Although the aborigines know that they acquired the pipe from the Malays, they believe they practiced smoking before this time, and point to the fact that there are several native tobaccos.[11] Whether this is true or not it is impossible to say at the present time, but nearly all the evidence seems to point to the introduction of smoking into Australia from a Malay source. However, if the latter is true, the natives quickly learned how to use native substitutes after they could no longer obtain Malay tobacco.

The substitution of the iron tomahawk (brought in as an article of trade by the Malays) for the stone axe can be understood, since the iron implement is a far more capable instrument, and—a more important reason—the tomahawk was easily acquired and it was not necessary to learn

[11] The Murngin insist that they had a native tobacco before the Macassar introduced the variety they use at the present time. The leaves were macerated and wrapped in paper bark and smoked as a cigarette, or put in a cane which had a hole in one end much like the Queensland type of pipe.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

177 part of their agricultural complex. It is probable that tides, currents, birds, and other natural causes introduced several floral species into the north that are part of the raw material used in the technological and economic life of the Murngin. Since the tamarind fruit is known to be edible, these plants, brought in by natural means, occupy the same position in Murngin life as the tamarind.

With the exception of the canoe, sail, mast, tobacco pipe, Malay beard, and tamarind tree, little else was contributed by these traders as a permanent part of Murngin material culture. Their influence on the interior people was far less than that felt by the coastal groups. The dugout, with its sail and mast, has not, even today, penetrated twenty miles inland, except by visits of the coastal people, even though there are large navigable rivers and inland lakes that would support a dugout canoe. The Malay pipe is generally used on the coast and the interior. Very few iron tomahawks ever reached the bush people. The tamarind tree is found only on the coast and the adjacent islands, for the Malay never penetrated the interior parts of Arnhem Land.

Malay Influence on the Social Life of the Murngin.—Although the contributions of Malay civilization to Murngin material culture were not large, the purely social elements added to the aboriginal civilization were still less, and probably of less importance in modifying the other social traits. The chief elements of immaterial culture that were adopted by the eastern Arafuran natives were: (1) a pidgin Malay language that was spoken by a considerable number of natives in all the coastal tribes, but not by all the male members of the society; (2) Malay personal and place names; (3) part of the mast-raising ceremony of the Malay voyagers; (4) a mourning ceremony; and (5) other fragmentary elements, such as folk tales.

177 198 A pidgin Malay dialect was spoken by most of the older men among the tribes along the Arafura coast. This language became a lingua franca among the various linguistic groups who border the coast. A man traveling from Cape Don, in the far west, could make himself understood to the people on Groote Eylandt. The language stimulated intertribal communication. The introduction of the dugout canoe, with its sail, also accelerated 177 and intensified the interrelations of the various local groups and dialectic 501 tribes. Anyone who has traveled a few hundred miles in a dugout, with 484 and without sails, quickly comes to the conclusion that a canoe with a sail can average more than double the distance of a canoe depending on paddles for locomotion. The sailing canoe also made it possible for two friendly groups separated by hostile clans to communicate when the intervening peoples were on the warpath. Before this time, with the old bark canoe, it was often necessary to land on unfriendly territory because of the voyager's inability to cover the distance in one day's paddling. Al-

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

though the dugout was capable of carrying more people than its predecessor, it did not develop into a war canoe.

The Malays gave all the islands, beaches, bodies of water, peninsulas, and other landmarks names from their own vocabulary, which the natives learned and used in addition to their own. All the locations in the whole territory which were touched by the Malay sailors have Malay as well as native terms. Men who do not know the Malay dialect usually know the Malay place names of a particular district.

Almost all the people of the Arafura country also have Malay personal names. These names were originally given them by the Malays, but they were passed by the natives to their own relatives through the custom of giving a sister's daughter's son, or a son's son, the name of a mother's mother's brother, or a father's father; and in the female line by giving the daughter's daughter or brother's son's daughter the name of a mother's mother or father's father's sister. The Murngin know which are Malay personal and place names and which are aboriginal in origin.

There were no Malay words adopted by the blacks to describe the various social institutions of the Murngin. No clan or local group, as far as the writer could determine, received a Malay name which was used by the black. No kinship term was adopted from the Malay terms, although it might be argued that the word for father (bapa) in Murngin nomenclature, being the same as the Malay word, was taken from the intruders. When it is realized that this same word bapa figures in the more central tribes as a kinship term, and that in some of these kinship systems it means older brother and in other places describes still different relatives, it will be seen that this likeness in the two languages was probably a coincidence. It could just as easily be argued that our word "papa" was taken over by the blacks and used for their word for father, since white civilization had been in contact with aboriginal Australian culture in the south and east for a considerable period of time. A visiting Malay, had he come to the Arafura country later than the white man, might have argued this were he as uncritical as many white theorists in their arguments for the diffusion of culture traits.

The Malays only slightly influenced Murngin mythology. Certain myths seem to have a possible Malay origin, or, if not Malay, then some other outside source, since they do not seem to fit into the general cultural background. For instance, the belief that a man acquires the soul of the man he has killed may be due to the transportation of the head-hunting idea from Indonesia to Australia by the Malay traders. On the other hand, it is also likely that this Indonesian idea came by way of New Guinea and then down to Australia at a much earlier period than this last, Malay contact.

Certain native myths have been somewhat modified to make a place

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

396 The natives then go over the boat with their iron hatchets, chop away any of the burned material and smooth the surface. The sides of the canoe are chipped on the inside as well as the outside. They are approximately an inch to an inch and a half thick along the gunwales and to about half way down, where they gradually increase in thickness. The bottom of the boat is from three to three and a half inches thick. The bow and stern also increase in thickness. It is impossible to tell one end from the other until a hole has been made in the stern for the anchor rope. The outside of the bottom of the boat is rounded and has no keel. There is no carving of any kind on any of the Murngin canoes.

The mast, from six to eight feet in height, is a sapling that has been barked. A notch is made at its top for tying the ropes of the sail.

501 177 Although some of the older men know what an outrigger is, as was demonstrated to the writer by drawings on the sand, no canoe in the area is ever fitted with one. The natives all insisted they never used them. It is impossible to state definitely the reasons for the natives of northeastern Arnhem Land not taking over the outrigger; the only reason given by them was that the canoe did not need it, and it was just as good without one. It is possible that their resistance to cultural traits generally, and particularly to any trait that causes extra labor, explains their lack of appreciation of the outrigger. Until the introduction of the dugout they had been using a bark canoe which did not possess the outrigger, and it is likely that their old pattern of behavior had such a strong hold upon them that the outrigger was not adopted.

501 In the interior part of the Murngin country the people do not possess boats of any description but use a specially constructed bark bundle, large enough to support one or two individuals, as a raft to cross streams. This type of raft is also used when the men wish to fish in the middle of a stream.

Paddles.—Paddles are made from light wood, usually stringy bark. The blade is roughly oblong in shape; and although the handle and blade are of one piece, the division between the two is indicated either by a sharp flare of the blade from the handle, or, rarely, by the top of the blade forming a right angle with the handle.

Paddles usually are five to five and one-half feet long, with the blade about two feet and the handle three. The blade width has about a four-inch norm. The handle is carved in the form of a cylinder. Sometimes the end of the handle has a square knob for a hand hold. The top and bottom of the blade are convex; the edges of the blades are very thin.

One type of blade tapers at the distal end, whereas the other has a squared end. Although the paints dissolve immediately in water, the [531] natives often paint their paddles for the mere pleasure of decorating them and seeing their beauty.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

Paddles and clubs have many traits in common and are obviously under the same technical influences. 501

Anchors.—An anchor consists of a large stone tied to a twelve to eighteen foot turtle rope, attached to the stern of a canoe. The canoe, with the aid of the stone anchor, can then be left near the water so that at low tide it is beached and at high tide it is floating but held from being carried to sea. This comparatively simple invention seems rudimentary and without significance, but a more careful analysis of its function shows it to be quite important. In the first place, instead of a man being forced to watch the tide and to hold the canoe during high tide, or beach it after considerable labor, this simple invention is substituted for him; or, to state it in another way, it takes the place of a man's hands, and is, therefore, one more projection of man's body into his culture through his tools. If the canoe is beached beyond high tide, the labor of several men is required both for taking it out of the water and putting it back again. The anchor acts as a labor-saving device.

5. Tools Used for Gathering Sea Food

Turtle Harpoon.—The turtle harpoon is a modification of the ordinary spear. Its shaft is about fifteen feet long and its diameter is much more than that of the usual spear shaft. The handle section has the usual smooth socket for the articulation of the spear-thrower, but the distal section is constructed entirely differently from that of the ordinary wooden or stone-headed spear. A socket several inches deep is bored into the far end of the shaft; this is used to keep in place the iron prong attached to the turtle rope. When the harpoon has been driven into the back of the turtle, dugong, or other sea animal, the prong comes loose from the shaft. 411

Harpoon Rope.—The rope for deep-sea harpooning and for anchoring a dugout canoe is made of the inner bark of the hibiscus. Unlike the two-ply string, it is composed of three strands. Each strand has a large number of fibers in it and the rope is about five-eighths of an inch in diameter. The harpoon rope is ordinarily about sixty to seventy feet long. It can be spliced by turning back the ends of the two pieces which are to be connected and interlocking the two loops. The strands of each end are then woven into the rope and wrapped with cord. A minimum of four people is necessary to manufacture a harpoon rope. It is never made by women. Whether three-ply rope is a Malay intrusion, a diffused technique from Papua or Melanesia, or invented by the Australian natives, cannot be proved. The fact that it is closely associated with the dugout canoe seems to suggest the Malay hypothesis, since the dugout in the western Arafura Sea is a Malay contribution to this civilization, and since the dugout carried with it the sail and the mast and the anchor rope as part of its complex. 441 283 [177]

Fish Nets.—Fish nets are made not by the loop method but with the ordi- 286

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 Q117 Muraglia Q117

After performing the dance of the tiger snake, *dunbania*, they each painted the death mark of the snake on their faces[3] and cast their spears at the sleeping man. These passed through both his chest and carrying-bag, killing him instantly.

The two brothers, waiting until the wives of *Djunmundia* returned from food-gathering, captured them and, putting them aboard the canoe, paddled to an island north of Bremer Island. During the night, however, the women escaped, swam to the mainland, and told the *Bukalatji*,[4] relatives of the murdered *Djunmundia*, how their husband had been murdered. When the two brothers discovered their loss they returned to their camp on Bremer Island.

During the next few days the *Bukalatji* worked hard making a number of bark canoes. Waiting until there was no moon, they launched them and paddled to Dambalia. Leaving their canoes to the north of the island, the *Bukalatji* crept through the low scrub to surround and kill *Tjuna-tjuna* and *Wururunga*. But the brothers heard them and, in their flight, came by chance on the bark canoes, which they started to cut to pieces with the large steel knives which the Malays had given them. They had almost finished their work of destruction when the head man of the *Bukalatji* came up and begged them not to destroy his own canoe, so that he could take all of his people home. The brothers relented and allowed the *Bukalatji* to depart.

After some time the two brothers left Bremer Island and went to live near Cape Wilberforce, where they met and married two women from the nearby islands. The wives were out collecting oysters one day when the *Bukalatji* again attacked the brothers and this time succeeded in killing them. This so enraged the women that they attacked the *Bukalatji* with the knives belonging to their husbands and killed them all. *Tjuna-tjuna* and *Wururunga* were then transformed into goannas and their camps on Bremer Island into trees. Between those trees there is a path, which must be kept clean by the local aborigines.

On Pl. 98A the two brothers, at *a*, are paddling their canoe to the mainland. On the left, at *b*, they are holding their spear-throwers and avenging spears in their hands. The elder brother, *Tjuna-tjuna*, is on the right. At *c* is their enemy, *Djunmundia*, transfixed by the two avenging spears, one of which has passed through both his chest and his carrying-bag (cross-hatched oval). In the lower right panel *d*, black circles enclosing the goannas are totemic trees mentioned in the myth; the parallel lines, the path between them; and the curves, nearby sand-hills.

The Man, Balonavati, and the Paper-bark Trees of Matamatani

Between Trial and Caledon Bays is a river, Gainmani. Near this river is the Matamatani swamp,[5] about half a mile across and filled with paper-bark trees.

3. The death mark, shown on the carved and painted head of *Banaramia*, Pl. 139D, E, is painted on the faces of all the men who take part in an avenging ceremony.
4. These are the mythical people who killed *Maruma*, the fisherman. See Pl. 96D.
5. This swamp is also mentioned in the myth of the three men and the bush-fire, Pl. 93B.

[text continues on p. 307]

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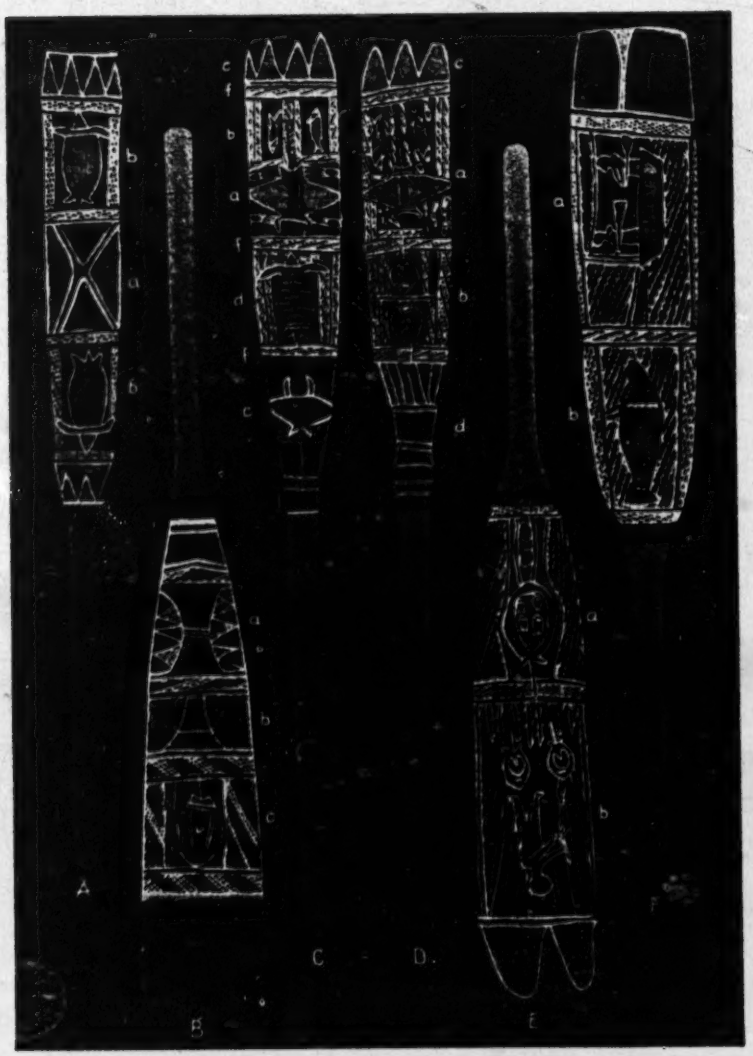

PLATE 109. Painted paddles, Yirrkalla

A The hawksbill turtle, kouwaradji
B The rain and stingrays
C, D The devil-ray and the hawksbill turtle
E The man, Maididji, and the stingrays
F The Mokoi, Rangi-rangi and Kultana

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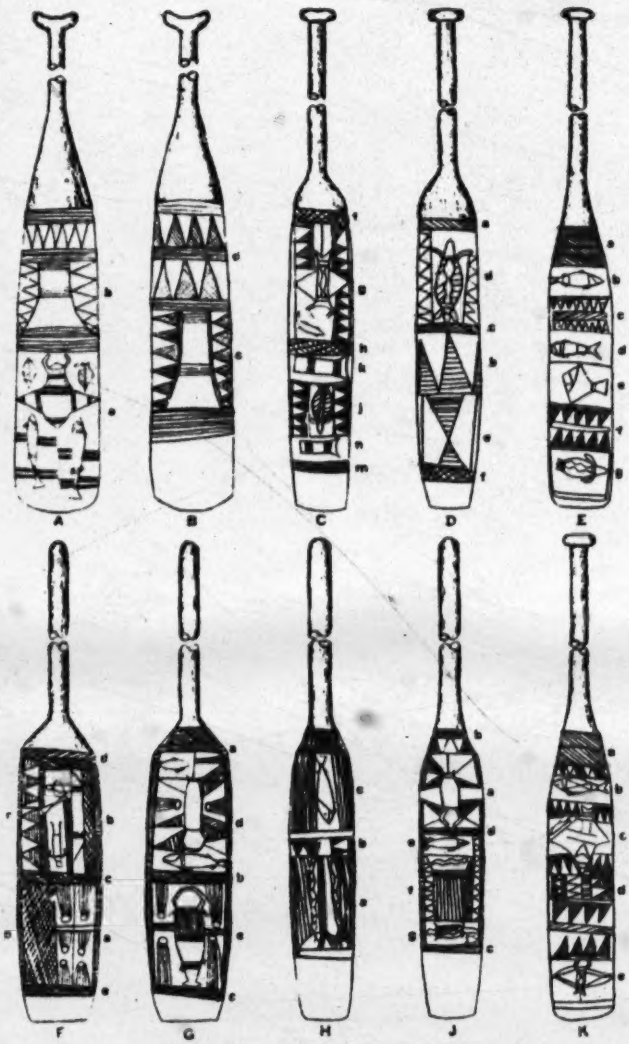

FIG. 58. Engraved paddles, Yirrkalla
Totemic creatures, Cape Arnhem and Port Bradshaw

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OI17 Murngin OI17

There are two bark paintings illustrating the dugong hunt at the totemic place of the *Mokoi*, between Cape Arnhem and Port Bradshaw.

Plate 111A shows two *Mokoi* in a canoe hunting four dugongs. The black line between the two lower dugongs is the long dugong spear. The white cross-hatching in this panel indicates the rough seas which allowed the dugongs to escape. The upper and lower left-hand panels, *a* and *c*, are sand-banks near the totemic place of the dugongs and *b* is a mythical stingray. By burying itself in the sand the stingray has clouded the water so much that it has the appearance of smoke, indicated by cross-hatching.

Plate 111D deals with the same totemic place as the previous painting. On the lower right are two *Mokoi* in their canoe, and below them three queen fish, *tinimbu*. In the left-hand panel the four dugongs are being hunted by the *Mokoi* and on the upper right is the upturned canoe of the hunters, now a large rock on the seashore. Cross-hatching, as before, indicates rough seas which prevented the capture of the dugongs.

The Mokoi, Delururu, Rangi-rangi and Kultana

Two brothers, *Delururu* and *Rangi-rangi*, accompanied by *Kultana*, who carry the spirits of the *jiritja* dead to their heaven, left Nalkuna in their canoe, *Lampu*, and paddled to the totemic place of the *Mokoi* at Cape Arnhem to spear dugongs. They had captured several and were resting on the beach when they saw a mortal man searching for turtle eggs. This gave the party such a fright that they hurried back to their canoe and paddled homeward as quickly as possible.[95]

In the centre of Pl. 111B are three *Mokoi* in their wooden canoe, called *Lampu*,[96] who have just speared a dugong. Reading from the left, their names are *Delururu*, *Rangi-rangi* and *Kultana*. The cross-hatching around the dugong is the rough sea water and the triangular patterns, *a*, the cumulus clouds created by the serpent, *bilumbira*. Above the canoe are five queen fish, *tinimbu*.

The Mokoi, Jambula and Bulanuna

Two *Mokoi*, a father, *Jambula*, and his son, *Bulanuna*, went to sea in their canoe, called *Tamalania*,[97] and speared a hawksbill turtle. This they took to a locality at Cape Arnhem, cooked and ate it. The canoe and the turtle are now parts of the topography of the coast of Cape Arnhem.

At *a*, on the right-hand panel of Pl. 111C, is *Jambula*, left, and his son, *Bulanuna*, returning to land with the turtle they have captured lying in the bottom of the canoe. An octopus and two queen fish are in the same panel. When, in still weather, these queen fish jump out of the water they cause the

95. This is a myth similar to that of *Birikiri* depicted on the engraved paddle, Fig. 58F.

96. Wooden canoes are *jiritja* and bark canoes *dua*. This conforms to the custom of the aborigines of north-eastern Arnhem Land of placing all modern objects in the *jiritja* moiety and the ancient ones in the *dua*. The canoes of the spirit people all have special names.

97. The aborigines have personal names for themselves, their dogs and their canoes.

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OI17 Murngin OI17

*773 225 The three aborigines, having between them made a new rope and spear, set out in a canoe to capture a turtle. They speared one, and hauled it to the surface, but were unable to pull the turtle close enough to the canoe to kill it. One of the aborigines had just jumped overboard to push the turtle within reach of his companions, when two large whales surfaced, one on either side of the canoe, almost swamping it. The men in the canoe, fearful of what might happen to [501] their companion, told him to swim under the canoe, and enter it over the stern, the usual way. But when he did so he dived into the mouth of one of the whales. As the creature surfaced, the aborigines saw the legs and buttocks of their companion protruding from its mouth.

Although the first reaction of the two fishermen was to paddle from the scene of the tragedy, they soon came back in the hope that they could retrieve the body. But they did not and had to return to camp to tell the sad news. Next morning, however, two boys, when looking for turtle eggs, found the body cast up on the beach.

136 *532 The bark painting, Pl. 115C, represents what is probably the hump-backed whale, which is known to frequent the waters of the Gulf of Carpentaria. The aborigines described this whale, which they called *dianmeri*, as a large fish, considerably longer than a canoe, which floats on the surface of the sea, a characteristic of the hump-backed whale. The curving lines on either side of the head represent the water parting as the creature swims along the surface, and the ovals down the central part of the body, the light-coloured skin markings of this whale. According to my informants the whale, *dianmeri*, has two mouths in [825] its tail, shown as ovals, with which it takes hold of a canoe to capsize it.

The Night-bird, Karawak, and the Opossum, Marungo at Cape Shield

*773 During mythical times the night-bird, *karawak* (unidentified) lived by himself at Milingimbi. One night, feeling lonely, he flew to the top of the tree in which he lived and called out to an opossum, *marungo*, whose home was in a hollow tree at Djerakoi, Cape Shield, near Blue Mud Bay, to come over and talk to him. But the opossum did not even reply. *Karawak* then flew to the Wessel Islands, then to Arnhem Bay and then to Cape Arnhem, at each place asking the opossum to pay him a visit, but the opossum made no sign of even having heard the night-bird. Finally *karawak* flew to the hollow tree at Cape Shield, the home of the opossum, and settling on the upper branches, again repeated his request. As soon as it was dark, the opossum left his nesting hollow and, climbing to the top of the tree, talked with *karawak* the whole night long. When, however, the first light of dawn came in the sky, the opossum descended the tree and went to sleep in a hollow limb. From that time until now, the night-bird, *karawak*, calls at night, the only time that the opossum will leave his home in the hollow tree and talk to him.

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PLATE 144. Carved figures, painted paddles and ceremonial objects

A, B. The tortoise, mimala
E, F The Mokoi, Balu-balu
J Fish, unidentified
C, D The Mokoi, Maranatuer and Bunjinkum
G, H Dua creatures of Melville Bay
K The goanna, bije

5: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1934
O117 Murngin O117

The soft bark of the giant tea-tree, commonly called paper-bark, is utilised for such purposes as the bandaging of wounds, the protection of spear points, the covering of huts, the carrying of babies, the parcelling of food, and the making of receptacles in which water is carried. 314

Fire is produced by wooden drills. The end of the drill is placed in a notch cut in a piece of soft-wood, which is held on the ground by the foot, and the drill is then spun between the palms of the hands. I have seen fire produced by this means in as short a time as 35 seconds. 372

Large dug-out canoes are made from the trunks of trees of several species, and in these canoes long voyages are made across the open sea. 501

The only musical instruments used, if they may be so termed, are the "Yiraki," or drone-pipe, and the "Bilma," or clap-sticks. The Yiraki is about four feet in length, and is constructed of a piece of wood about three inches in diameter which has been hollowed by termites. At the smaller end a mouthpiece is formed of beeswax. This instrument supplies a droning accompaniment during the singing of chants. No tune upon it is possible, its range being limited to three notes of the scale, which are produced by a variation of the wind pressure. 534

The Bilma are simply two pieces of hardwood, oval in section, and about one foot in length, which, being struck together, supply the "time" for chants and dances.

Sometimes two boomerangs are held in the one hand, separated by one or more fingers, and by a quick movement of the wrist are made to produce a rhythmic rattling.

In the manufacture of these various weapons and utensils a high degree of constructive skill and neatness of workmanship is evidenced. Practically all these articles are richly ornamented, and probably nowhere in Australia has aboriginal decorative art reached a finer development than in East Arnhem Land. 531

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

But it is in the realm of the great song cycles and the stories which survive that a colourful picture of Malayan and Macassan life on these shores is unfolded.

At various sites on the north-east and south-east coast of Arnhem Land, at Arnhem Bay, Melville Bay, Port Bradshaw, Trial Bay, Caledon Bay and Groote Eylandt, these Indonesians of different types (not all true Macassan or Malay traders) founded their settlements. They built their houses on stilts, roofed them with woven leaves and fibre of coconut palm and even furnished them in an elementary way. They kept fowls,[2] fastened by one leg to the posts of the huts. Nearby they erected large boilers, and racks for drying the trepang, and out in the bays their ships were lying at anchor or being repaired. Each main settlement was a hive of industry, with Macassans and Australian Aborigines employed as labourers for specified payments. There were bartering depôts. Local natives brought in pearls, tortoise-shell and other natural products that the Indonesians wanted, and were given in exchange East Indies currency, introduced foods such as rice and sweetmeats, or cloth, knives and tobacco. This trade was well established and its influences are still apparent today.[3]

The visitors not only brought goods from their own country. While they were settled on the mainland they manufactured pottery, knives, cloth and sails, and they kept written accounts of their transactions with the Aborigines and with their own employees. The effects of their sojourn are seen in some forms of the local material culture. They introduced the dug-out canoe, which has almost replaced the indigenous bark variety, and it was from them that the natives learned to use steel in making knives, spear blades and tomahawks.

But it seems to have been in their diversions and entertainments, or in their ceremonies, that the Indonesians exerted their greatest influence on Aboriginal life. Watching them, the Aborigines learnt to play cards,[4] and began to adapt their song rhythms to alien tunes and the sounds of foreign musical instruments. Their mortuary ceremonies came to be associated with the departure of the praus, and with Macassan burial rites.[5] The important secular ceremony of the carved *wuramu* figure, the

8: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1954
OI17 Murngin OI17

628

Plate 15a: A ritualized "peace-making" ceremony held at Yirrkalla.

Plate 15b: A canoe from "Badu," washed up at Yirrkalla.

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[p. 25(J)]

ceremonial exchange system. Besides weapons and fishing lines, the heavier types of rope as well as most of the larger fishing nets, are made by men. In the coastal groups where bark canoes are used, the making of these craft is also the work of the men. In the case of dugout canoes, a man either makes his own canoe, a long and laborious task taking weeks or months of time and requiring a good deal of intensive hard work, or he employs a craftsman to make it for him, in which case he assumes the responsibility for the organisation of the work and for the payments involved. The large, coarsely woven fish traps, which may be five or six feet, or even more, in length, as well as other paraphernalia associated with fishing, are usually made by the men, although women may also assist.

How subtle may be the driving force which induces the natives to work, is shown by the following example. During the south-east or dry season the people rarely build houses, but are content with breakwinds, until the north-west or wet season. Even then they generally delay the work of gathering bark and other necessary building materials until the actual onset of the rains. During a patrol at the beginning of the north-west when we were debating as to whether a heavy storm that threatened was really about to break, one of the natives said "*ŋärru tobitj*",[13] "my muscles have twitched", (and therefore it will not rain). And such is the belief of the natives in these portents that the people would not go out and collect the necessary paperbark to make a proper camp, despite the threatening sky.

[13] Muscular twitching, called *tobitj*, is an omen or portent which is believed to give warning of a forthcoming event, or to foretell the approach of an enemy or a visitor. The part of the body in which the twitching occurs indicates the relationship in which the visitor stands to the person who receives the warning.

sionally, when men were short, they helped to make up the crews of canoes which operated as tenders from the praus in diving for trepang.

Today the word *mälli*, with this idea of "payment", is used principally in connection with the manufacture of wooden dugout canoes, and these form part of the culture complex that was left as a legacy by the Indonesian visitors, a fact which is stressed in mythology.[26]

A glance at the various types of transactions listed above, in which property, or *gerri*, changes hands, and in which the natives' own terms and classification have been used, brings out the fact that in all but one the social or ceremonial aspect rather than the hard material or "commercial", the strictly economic, is stressed, and that in only one is the idea of direct *payment* or recompense, paramount. This is in the manufacture of the wooden dugout canoe, *lippa lippa*, which, as will be seen in section 4, is the work of special craftsmen. Apart from receiving it as a gift, there are two principal ways of obtaining a canoe. The first is by employing a craftsman to cut it, the second, called "*täkkul koŋ gurrupän*", lit. "axe hand give", is to pay the craftsman by presenting him with a steel axe, which, after he has used it to cut the canoe, becomes his own property.

[26] There is some tendency to assume that these wooden canoes were once manufactured with stone axes. Actually proof is not lacking of the fact that the *lippa lippa* (wooden dugout canoe) was part of the culture complex introduced by the visitors from Indonesia and that these canoes were never made in Australia until after the introduction of the iron axe. (This, however, does not apply to the seagoing dugout outrigger canoes of Eastern Cape York Peninsula, North Queensland, which were made with native shell adzes, but which had a separate origin.)

Not every man is skilled in weaving *bäti* (baskets), of which many types are recognised, each with its own name and each made for a specific purpose. A man with special skill in weaving becomes known, but he is called merely *koŋ mainmäk*, a "good hand". Such a man may acquire some local renown and receive substantial payments (*baka bäkmärämma*) in return for his work, but again, this is a tribute to, and an acknowledgement of, the *marr* of the master craftsman, the prestige he brings, rather than "payment" for his activities, his craftsmanship. But it shows the beginnings of the recognition of craft specialisation, the *virtu* of special skill in craftsmanship.

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But in the case of the *lippa lippa*, the wooden dugout canoes, which may exceed 24 feet in length and may be capable of carrying upwards of six to eight men on sailing

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to use these stingray spines is the prerogative of these clans only and is jealously guarded.

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Again, the fine appearance and balance of a spear is not always a gauge of its worth. I once remarked to an informant, Raiwälla, of a spear shaft, that it was crooked and twisted, and the spear not of much value. But he corrected me quickly and pointed out that as the shaft was crooked the spear was not "flash" and was therefore more likely to fly straight to its mark. Such a remark is enlightening, because it stresses at once the great difference in the way in which the white man and the Arnhemlander look at even so simple an artefact as a spear. To the white man, a wooden shaft is of good or indifferent craftsmanship, but the native attributes personality to it. Its very appearance may be deceptive. It may possess *marr* from its background and association. For this reason a native may place great value upon spears received within the ceremonial exchange cycle, from areas renowned for weapons of a certain type, although to the eye of the white man they may appear to be inferior to those which he makes for himself. The native recognises the prestige (the *marr*) of the master craftsman. By their associations certain *gerri* possess *marr*, and they have therefore a vastly enhanced *psychological* value as fighting or hunting weapons.

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9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943) 1949
OI17 Murngin OI17

[396] voyages in the open sea, the matter is different. These craft
501 are hollowed out of a single tree. They have no keels, but
● are quite smooth underneath, and today are built without outriggers (although these are said to have been used by the Macassars), and depend for their safety and stability as much on the skill employed in their manufacture as in
[435] the seamanship of their crews. These *lippa lippa* are unlike any other element of material culture and are valued greatly.
173 The natives say that in former times the Macassar voyagers
439 brought these craft to Arnhem Land each season in their
648 praus and that a prau carried as many as eight or ten *lippa*
501 *lippa*. When the time came for their departure, the Macassar men presented the canoes to the natives as part of their farewell payment, and this became a ceremonial occasion.

177 Before the coming of the Indonesian voyagers the natives
501 used only bark canoes,[29] called *bärwän*, and swimming logs,
[396] and it was only after the introduction by the Macassars of the *lippa lippa*, together with iron tools for cutting it, that the Arnhem Land people began making wooden canoes for themselves. Much labour is involved in the cutting of a big canoe, and none of the tools formerly used by the natives of Arnhem Land would have been fitted for
[412] this work. Although they possessed stone axes and shell scrapers, they lacked such tools as the fine, strong, relatively efficient adzes made from shell such as were used by the sea-faring peoples of Cape York Peninsula. This fact, and the way in which the wooden canoe was introduced, as well as its association with the Macassar voyagers, has given the *lippa lippa* a special place in Arnhem Land culture. But

[314] [29] The bark used is that of *Eucalyptus tetrodonta*, one of the "stringybarks", which is much used in technology. In addition to the manufacture of canoes, it serves for the roofing of houses and for the manufacture of certain vessels used for carrying water, as well as in the preparation of food.

it must be remembered that the *lippa lippa* and the iron tools for cutting them were part of the pattern of Indonesian culture adopted by these people from the Macassar voyagers.

In the case of the bark canoe, while a good deal of skill and experience was needed in making the craft, the actual time involved amounted to a few hours only. A man was generally assisted in stripping the sheet of stringybark,[80] and in the heating and folding of this, by his wife or other near kin, and no special organisation was necessary to feed him, or to relieve him of the need to hunt, over a period of weeks. But with the building of a big sea-going dugout canoe the matter is different and a considerable amount of organisation is necessary to build and launch the craft.

Today there are three principal means of obtaining *lippa lippa*. The first is as a gift of the kind called *tadoit* (pages 40-41), to send back the *marr* after a *ŋarra* or other ceremony, a means, however, which is uncertain because it cannot be solicited. Of the other and more direct methods of obtaining canoes, *näkkül koŋ gurrupän*, (p. 52) is probably the most favoured, while straight-out purchase (*mälli*) (pp. 51-52), in which the *djalimulimo* or *djärtunmirri* is directly engaged to carry out the work, is used less frequently. My informants said that the *djalimulimo* feeds himself during the progress of the work. This means that he must either spend a considerable part of his time in hunting or fishing or that he must depend upon his wives or other female kin to feed him in the period during which he is actually cutting the canoe. More rarely, responsibility for feed-

[80] Although most of these bark canoes, even those which are about 14 or 15 feet in length, are constructed from a single sheet of bark, some, especially in the Gulf of Carpentaria, are made from two or more sheets sewn together.

10: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1958
OI17 Murngin OI17

I was doing all this to learn the language and find out if it was all right 159
for me to live with that girl. We went back to camp that night, but I slept with all the other unmarried men. In the morning all the young men laughed at me. I couldn't tell what they said, but I knew by the signs they made they were making a fool out of me for not sleeping with that girl.

Cape Don Tommy talked to me again. "She is my daughter. Don't be afraid of her." That night I went into her hut. She came in and lay beside me. I was very ashamed. I tried to lie quiet, but I shook all over.

She was a young girl. Maybe I was no older than she, but she had had sweethearts, I think, before this, from the way she acted. I had never had a woman before this. It was my first time.

She tickled me and made me laugh. She rubbed her fingers all over my body, being careful to keep away from my penis. This made me feel better and did not frighten me. I laughed. She pushed her stiff index finger into my stomach. After this I lost my fear and I had intercourse with her.

In the morning she took me with her. She told me by sign language she was going to teach me her language (pages 515-518). I wanted to learn it very much. That day she taught me how to say mangrove tree and barrimundi and palm fruit and all other things women gather for food. She did this as we walked along. I lived with her all the time I was in her country, and she taught me the language, and I can speak it now. When I went with the same white man, who had come back with his lugger, to Elcho Island I left her and told her I would be back in a little while. That white man and his Malays had brought some gin, and I was drunk. It all seemed like a dream. I remember she cried and cried and wanted me to take her, but I said no. When we were away at sea I was sober and I said, "Where is my girl?"

They said, "You left her behind."

I said, "I must go back and get her." I was going to get up and go back, but I was told to wait and get her when we once more came back to her country. They said they were older men and understood those things better than I did. I was a fool to have left her. I was very angry with the Malay for giving me that gin. It may be that he wanted her for himself.

We went on and got to Cape Stewart, where we shot same geese with the white man's gun. Soon we reached Elcho Island. It had been so long I had forgotten it. I did not know it when I saw it, and Cape Don Tommy told me it was Elcho Island. All the people ran away when they saw us for they were afraid of the white men, and they had thought that I had been killed when I left with them before. Finally some of them back back out of the bush. They had no canoes then because the Macassar men had stopped [501]
coming and they had not yet learned how to make them from the Kalpu on

10: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1958
OI17 Murngin OI17

159 the English Company Island, people who still remembered how to do it
[501] (pages 459-460). Some of the people came out to our boat by lying on a large log and paddling with their hands and feet. I got in the dinghy and went ashore with some of the people on the boat. When my mari saw me
[152] he cried and cried. Some people are like that among us black men. We cry when we meet people just as we cry sometimes when we tell them goodbye. I tried to talk to him, but I couldn't say anything. It was just the same as if I had lost my language. I had to talk to him in the sign language. I felt very foolish. I brought flour with me, but they did not know what it was.
[252] They cooked flour in paper bark just like they did palm tree flour.
[609] All the people were very angry with the white man for keeping me away so long, and some of them sneaked out in the bush and got their spears and clubs and were going to kill the white man. I said no, that it was no good. I said, "The white men talk very hard and sometimes they swear at you, but inside they are all right. Sometimes when they swear, they mean
[439] good." While we were there I got my people to make gifts of turtle shell and pearl to the white man, and he gave them hatchets and knives and calico. I got in the boat and started to go back to Port Darwin with the white man. Cape Don Tommy and the white man quarreled when we got to Croker Island because Cape Don Tommy wanted to sleep on shore. We got out at Croker Island and went by canoe to Cape Don. There I met that girl again, but her husband was there then. We went on to Port Darwin for a moon and came back to Elcho Island. Once more I went into the bush and stayed.

His Wives and Their Parents

159 581 828 825 Black men walk about single and by themselves. At first they have no mates. By and by they find one that belongs to them. By and by children come. White men walk about by themselves. By and by they find a woman, and more children come out. The Macassar man was all the same.

Big old man kangaroo walks about single and by himself. By and by he catches his woman, and then there are little kangaroos. Opossum and fly and bandicoot—they are all the same.

Python catches his mate and by and by there are eggs, then there are children. Frilled-neck lizard, native companion, honeybees, pigeon, hawk-billed turtle, and all those animals—they are just the same.

Black men cut down trees and by and by little ones come up. Everywhere and all the time it is always the same. Walk around single, by and by a mate, and by and by children. There is an inside meaning to this. Some of us old men who are not fools understand. If those two Wawilak creator sisters had not done wrong in their own country and fornicated with those

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15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

142
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LANDFALL

Two Yulengor families in their dug-out canoes

133

ARNHEM LAND BEACH

Imported cattle near Yirrkala station

[facing p6]

YULENGOR

484 I was awakened by the trilling of a butcher bird, and as the sun tipped the motionless trees we resumed our journey through dew-laden grass. No food had been saved from the night before and sharp eyes were on the look-out for something to eat, but it was not till about ten o'clock that the women cooeed and a halt was made to cook an opossum and two goannas.

The day was uneventful and at sundown we came to a deep crocodile-infested creek about a quarter of a mile wide. As there were no canoes about, I wondered how the crossing [481] was to be made, but without hesitation several youths waded in and swam over with their spears. This is the way all the men would have crossed, but Jirring suggested that he and I wait with my medical equipment and camera till his wives and children arrived with their food and family possessions. They were prepared for the crossing, and had sheets of [501] paper-bark which they stacked in heaps on the water, driving digging-sticks through each stack to hold them together. Small children and bundles of food were then piled on top, older children clung to the sides, and a woman swam beside each pile as she pushed it to the other side. Medicines, camera, and swag were successfully shipped in the same way. Such crossings, with yelping dogs, shrilling women, and squealing children, apparently scare away hungry crocodiles, for they seldom attack, although on this occasion several glided off the mud into the stream as we approached. At dusk we came to the camp of a Blue Mud Bay horde, some distance from the river.

[497] [164] I spent several days in this camp with Yulengor I had not seen before, and was able to treat wounds and ulcers and give hypodermic injections for yaws and gangosa. By day 484 the men stayed under leafy bough shelters, talking, sleeping, 512 and preparing totemic emblems with intricate and artistic 462 designs. Women went food-gathering, and at sundown arrived with loads of firewood and dilly-bags bulging with

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

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POWERFUL PADDLERS

During cyclonic weather five Yulengor paddled 130 miles, past hostile islands, to get medical aid for the author

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INTERMENT

Skeletons being placed in a burial post

[facing P135]

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

immediately emerged in the form of Melville and Bathurst Islands. The Women then made rafts from sheets of paper-bark, drove digging sticks through the sheets to keep them in place, and loaded their few remaining possessions on top. They swam behind these and crossed the eighteen-mile-wide Dundas Strait to Melville Island, and by this method aboriginal women today cross creeks and rivers.

Aboriginals on Melville and Bathurst Islands form a distinct social group and have no intercourse with the adjacent mainland. Nevertheless, Yulengor five hundred miles eastward maintain that their Junkgowa went to these islands and there distributed nomads, totems, and animals. One old man told me (and what he said is accepted generally) that he went to Bathurst Island on a pearling lugger, and in the customary exchange of sacred lore with the islanders they showed him their totemic water-hole, which, they said, was inhabited by two grotesque mythical beings. These creatures had the tails and bodies of snakes, but the heads of men. That was enough for the visitor; although he did not enlighten his hosts, he went back to his own people, and said: 'I know our Junkgowa are there.'